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ABSTRACT

This speech, presented to undergraduate students who serve as mentors and tutors to high school students, emphasizes the need for increased high school graduation rates in order for the United States to remain competitive in the world economy and points out the importance of the mentoring program at the Hudson-Mohawk Association in furthering this effort. Mentors should be aware that educating individuals to perform technical work in production and distribution is just as important as developing professionals; they should also be aware of the discouragement and confusion faced by adolescents as they grow up in America today, and the impact of this on the tutoring process. The tutors are encouraged to continue their education, to earn doctoral degrees, and to consider college teaching as a career. Several rewards of college teaching are pointed out, such as working with young people and seeing them grow, and the power to affect society through research, writing, and creative endeavors. The speech also comments on minority representation in higher education, the fluctuating demand for college teachers, financial assistance for doctoral education, length of time needed to complete a doctorate, college teaching opportunities without a doctorate, and job opportunities outside higher education. (JDD)

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Thinking About College Teaching*

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I can't say enough about the mentoring program at the Hudson-Mohawk Association and I am completely fascinated by the tutoring aspects of the program. It is touching many lives at a time when it is absolutely imperative that we work with young people as never before to assure that they grow up to become productive human beings. America is facing large problems and we simply can no longer consign large portions of young people to a future of unproductive lives.

America is facing twin economic challenges: from the new European Common Market and from the growing economic powers of the Pacific Rim. In 1992 the ECM, as it is called, will comprise 12 nations with no trade restrictions and thus tremendous opportunities for every nation to make and sell products to 360 million people. This will be the largest trading bloc the world has ever known. In the Pacific Rim, we watch in fascination as nation after nation begins to replicate the Japanese experience: Korea, Malaysia, Singapore et al. Everyone who looks at this unfolding scenario points out immediately that more of our young people need to graduate from high school and that they must know more and think better when they do. These observers include analysts from the

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economic powers in the ECM and the Pacific Rim themselves. Things simply aren't good.Ninety-five percent of Japanese teen-agers graduate from high school. Seventy-five percent of American teen-agers graduate. Japanese production workers easily compute the means and standard deviations necessary carry out statistical quality control for assembly line products. Precious few American production workers can do anything like this. The results are vast differences in quality of finished products and vast differences in what America is able to sell around the world. And in our own country! We simply cannot go on like this. This is the path that leads down the road to a new form of economic colonialism, where, increasingly, countries with better educated and better trained work forces buy American raw materials for a low price and sell Americans manufactured products for a high price.

Some of the youngsters you tutor will catch fire and go on to college. Others will find work after high school in production and distribution. This is the very type of worker analysts tell us we are losing the game with: the assembly line worker, the truck driver, the construction worker and the ever-growing armies of technicians and installers and repairers. The ordinary person who must lift his or her game as sports analysts would say. And to whom every assistance must be given in the process. They will be in such short supply by the year 2000, according to the National Council on Competitiveness, that they will be called "gold-collar workers" instead of blue-collar workers. The new name will derive from the

kinds of salaries and service fees they will command.

So, tutor on! I am sure that sometimes your kids comprise a challenge of the first order. Sometimes they are simply not available, having failed to show for a tutoring session. Sometimes they have trouble concentrating on the lesson. Sometimes they become involved in some sort of antisocial behavior. I say to you: tutor on! If you were not on the scene, things would be worse. Remember, America is going to <u>need</u> these kids. We can no longer consign them to the academic ash heap. If you think we can, talk to some of our older baby-boomers who are facing a future where the three workers now paying FICA to support 13 social security recipients will dwindle to less one by the time they try to retire. Many of these individuals will not be able to retire if we try to continue to get by in America with a system which consigns large numbers of potentially productive people to unproductive lives. Tutor on!

"Get on your tutees' case" when it is called for, but recognize this sobering fact: it is getting harder and harder for kids to grow up in America. Indeed, some become so discouraged and confused they never grow up at all. According to calculations by Ford Foundation analysts, a dozen or so committed suicide somewhere in America by the time we finished our lunch today and another dozen will commit suicide by the time I finish my speech. These figures tear your heart out but they comprise a fact of life. Coming of age in America can be a difficult task. Kids coming of

age in America today can use all of the help they can get. So, please, tutor on! Every oar in the water counts.

Many college students who tutor also take an interest in college teaching and I want to talk about college teaching today, in the hope that many of you will give some thought to entering graduate school, completing a Ph.D. and taking up the profession. I also hope that many of the mentors entertain the same hopes and aspirations for you and that a large number of mentors and mentees at Hudson-Mohawk will turn to and begin to plan seriously for such a venture.

College teaching is a fine profession and let me tell you that this is an unequivocal fact. Whenever lists of "good" jobs are compiled, college teaching is well up among the leaders. I have yet to see it at the top of a list, but being third or fourth or fifth from the top is not bad. Not bad at all.

We have about 800,000 full-time and part-time teachers. They work in 3400 or so widely varied college and universities and they teach some 13 million students. What do these individuals say about the rewards of life as a professor? Invariably, the reward of working with young people and seeing them grow leads the list. It seems that watching young men and women come of age, and feeling a part of the process, far outweighs the value derived from many other things people could do with their lives. People such as Theodore Caplow, Reece McGee, Everett Ladd et al, who make these surveys point this out time and time again. Decent remuneration,

i.e., salaries and perquisites in the range of a corporate middle manager, are well up on the list in the rankings, of course, but, again, the reward of watching and helping young minds grow and develop invariably leads the list.

Following close behind the top two variables, regarding rewards from college teaching, is the reward of being able to use one's <u>own</u> mind and the reward of seeing <u>it</u> grow. College teachers put a lot into their minds over their careers and they can feel and appreciate its growth over time, it seems. A full mind is a precious treasure. It assures an ordered universe to the extent possible and one's life can never be boring. There is so much to think about.

A fourth, and very important, reward of college teaching is the power to affect society through research and writing and creative endeavors. Sometimes this involves social science professors in efforts to shape public policy in a way that makes our society more just and more humane. Sometimes it involves humanities professors in matters of the human spirit, e.g., a novel, a poem, a musical piece, a piece of art, which gives meaning to life. For the science and engineering professors, it can be a discovery which changes the course of human life: the new bacteria, the new spliced gene, the new production process, and so on. Sometimes generationality is involved in this process. While the professor will not make the contributions, he or she will often live to see his or her students go out into the world and make

them. Henry Brooks Adams, the historian, once said: "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." I say the same to you. Think about college teaching!

A potential reward to both mentors and mentees at Hudson-Mohawk is the satisfaction of knowing that you have opened the pipeline for minority doctorate recipients a bit wider and that your work serves as living testimony to the power of the mentoring relationship. Minorities comprise less that ten percent of the total number of the 32,000 or so doctorates received at American colleges and universities each year. They comprise about 30 percent of the population, however, and by the year 2000, they will comprise about 40 percent of the work force. America is in deep, deep trouble if it fails to educate and employ the talents of these people. It is pure, unadulterated economic suicide to fail to do this. A sure way to wind up as somebody's colony.

The best way to think about this is to think brains. Brains see no color and Americans must see less and less. And they must do this in a hurry. We simply have to train <u>every</u> brain to assure ourselves that the brain which might come up with the new product or new process or new discovery is trained and in the brain pool, as we brace for an onslaught of new products and processes and discoveries from the ECM and the Pacific Rim. Creativity among brains is completely random, it seems. We can't breed for it and we can do little to train for it. We simply have to train the brains of each cohort of children and youth to the best of our

ability and hope that the creative brains we need will come from these cohorts. There is no other way to do this.

We have to recognize that creative brains often come from some humble and out-of-the-way stations in life. And we must make sure that these brains are trained. The plastics on your car, the peanut and soybean-based products in your kitchen cabinet, along with some 300 other products came from the brain of a man who was born a Missouri slave and who was once swapped for a race horse. His master used the horse to ransom him from slave raiders who had kidnapped him and were preparing to sell him down the river.

Luckily for America, his master also facilitated the training of our protagonist's brain. He did this by giving him his freedom, $25, the directions to a Kansas preparatory academy which was 60 miles away, a three-day supply of food, and a handwritten letter of introduction. The sturdy 12 year-old walked to the academy, carrying a little satchel containing all of his earthly belongings. The trip took two days and he spent the night in a little cave, watching in fear for slave raiders, and for murderous roadmen who would surely take his little cache of money, and perhaps his life as well. The rest is history. There was farm work to get through both the academy and, later, Iowa State University. There was teaching and research at Iowa State University and, later, at Tuskegee University, and there was an outpouring of a tremendous cornucopia of products and processes - products and processes in great demand all around the world! All out of a single brain! The

man as you by now have guessed was George Washington Carver.

What about the job market for college teaching in this day and time? Prospects are good. Demand for college teachers, like demand for other professional services, fluctuates. When enrollments of full-time students lag, as in the baby-bust years from which we are emerging, the market is sluggish and is limited, for the most part, to replacements of retiring professors. When enrollments of full-time students rise as in the echo-boom years into which we are headed, the market picks up and shortages of college teachers almost always appear. When students are plentiful and retirements are also heavy, the demand for newly-minted Ph.D. recipients can be unbelievable. We are headed into such a period today, with echo-boom youngsters soon to flood the campuses and professors hired to teach the baby-boomers flooding the ranks of the retired. Shortages will be so severe, according to the research of William Bowen and Michael Sosa, that less than one applicant will be available for each of the openings in the social sciences and humanities in the mid and late '90s. The situation in science and mathematics will approach this condition in the early '90s. This may be the most propitious time in the history of higher education for a college senior to enroll in a Ph.D. program! I say to you: Think about it! Think about college teaching!

What about financial assistance for students enrolling in Ph.D. programs? The prospects are good. Whenever shortages for college professors loom, governments, foundations and colleges and

universities themselves find ways to expand financial assistance to graduate students, and thus expand the numbers of Ph.D. students. The level of assistance is not grand, of course, usually involving tuition, a stipend which will (barely) keep mind and body together and, importantly, health and life insurance benefits. The economists among us can come up with some fine computations about foregone income vs. the enhanced earning status of Ph.D. students. Invariably they note that the investment of time and this foregone income is well worth it. Give it some thought.

What is it like to work on a Ph.D.? To complete a Ph.D. program? As young people sometimes say, "it is a trip!" The term "mind bending" comes to mind. This is not surprising. People who win a Ph.D. are America's best. Many are called and few are chosen. Indeed, the 32,000 doctorates won by individuals each year in our country represent, barely eight-tenths of one percent of the 4 million children born in each of the cohorts from which these individuals came. I often tell my students that they will comprise eight-tenths of a person when they receive their Ph.D. degrees. Many retort that the statistics would be better if the professors would lighten up a bit. That the Ph.D. program itself grinds at least two-tenths of a percent of a person off of Ph.D. students as they go through the program. I am happy to report that discussions have been broached in college teaching circles about what, if anything, can be done to ease the path to the Ph.D., while still maintaining rigorous standards. Some critics note that some

practices in Ph.D. programs are actually medieval and, to be sure, some of the war stories emanating from the ranks of college teachers themselves can be terrifying. You will benefit from the reforms of this movement, if any obtain. Whatever, don't let horror stories put you off. Look at, and talk to, people you know who have Ph.D. degrees. This is surely the value of a mentoring relationship. Ask questions about the process, over and above course taking and course completion. Trust me, you will soon decide that if they can do it, you can too. You will feel secure in knowing that you will appear at the gate armed with knowledge to carry you through the routine matters and most contingencies of a Ph.D. program. You will know that advice on what to do in unplanned-for situations is just a phone call away. A phone call to your mentor. Think about college teaching! Think about the Ph.D.!

How long does it take one to complete a Ph.D.? Students who enroll in Ph.D. programs the September after graduation from college can complete a Ph.D. degree in three or four years. Many students work a year or two before going to graduate school and others compile large numbers of graduate credits on a part-time basis over a number of years. This increases the <u>average</u> elapsed time from baccalaureate to Ph.D. to nearly ten years, according to figures from the National Research Council. Eager-beaver students never take this long, of course. Neither do students with mentors showing them the way and cheering them on.

Can one teach in college without finishing a Ph.D. degree?

Absolutely. Many of the part-time Ph.D. students mentioned above hold full-time or part-time jobs in liberal arts colleges, community colleges, regional state universities and colleges and, on occasion, in research universities. Well over 80 percent of all community college teachers hold master's degrees and over a third of all college students are enrolled in these colleges. Over 50 percent of the the professors in your average liberal arts college or regional state university or college hold master's degrees. I might add that most of these individuals do not aspire to a Ph.D. and that there is little pressure on them to get one. The emphasis in these schools is on teaching and working with students. In research universities, like SUNY-Albany or UConn, the emphasis is on research and most professors have Ph.D.s. Needless to say, the pay is different for people teaching with a master's degree and those teaching with a Ph.D. The intrinsic rewards, however, can be the same. Indeed, they are sometimes higher for master's holders teaching in small liberal arts colleges. Such is the emphasis on the student at these schools.

What about jobs in corporations, governments, foundations and elsewhere if one wants to leave college teaching for some reason? One and all would hope that once you are "into" college teaching, as young people would say, you would never have a reason to leave it. If you do, however, the jobs are there. Indeed, nearly 40 percent of the new Ph.D. recipients in recent years took jobs in places other than college campuses. This is especially true for

science and mathematics doctorate recipients, and, I might add, it is a matter of serious concern for college and university administrators. Think corporations and governments and foundations. But think college teaching first!

Again, I am totally gratified by what is going on at the Hudson-Mohawk Association. I wish all of you every success. I hope to receive word in the next decade or so about your successes: Tutees who graduated and who are doing well as gold-collar workers. Tutees who caught fire and went to the top as college students. Tutors who are a.k.a. le docteur and le professeur! Or le masteur! Mentors who can hardly find a shirt or blouse which will keep its buttons as chests expand with pride. Program directors who are having the same problems. I also hope that you will be enjoying the sincerest form of flattery available to you: Emulation. That scores of Hudson-Mohawks across America have adopted your model and have enjoyed successes like yours.

Good luck.